ISSN 0712-7774

CEREBUS
mothers & daughters
5

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155
FEB

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

it's January 28 and I'm trying to wrap this up in a hurry so I can get on with drawing issue 156. San Francisco was nine days ago and an unbelievable launch for the Tour. Brian Hibbs had his best day ever, financially, and the biggest turn-out for any signing (and he's had Neil Gaiman there *twice*). Almost seven hundred people attended the Sunday convention; our benefit auction raised almost a thousand dollars US for the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (the cover to Cerebus 152 went for $450 alone). Mike *(Sandman)* Dringenberg was at the *Comix Experience* party and did a thumbnail sketch of a benefit piece he's working on featuring Cerebus, Death (at Neil Gaiman's request), the Regency Elf and the fiddler from Barry Windsor-Smith's "Cerebus Dreams" story. The Diamondback decks sold *extremely* well. Lots of old friends were there, including Trina Robbins, Steve Leialoha (who has promised a benefit piece for a later stop), David Lee Ingersoll, Dan Vado, David Caldwell, Jim Friel, the Nash girl who broke Jay Attaway's heart and Rob Lavender's Nicole. It was like a five day letters page.

★★★★★★★★★★

Orders continue to pour in for the *Cerebus* reprint books. The announcement that we will be offering the books to the Direct Market (*Church & State* volume one in March, volume two in June, *Jaka's Story* in September and *Melmoth* in December) has helped, not hurt our sales. Reorders for the *Cerebus* volume exceeded our supply and we are also low on *High Society*. We shipped 60,000 copies of *Free Cerebus*, making it the largest circulation comic book in Aardvark Vanaheim's fourteen year history.

★★★★★★★★★★

Fred Greenberg informs me that Will Eisner has confirmed his appearance at the May 3 Tour stop in Miami. I can't tell you how happy I am at this news and I look forward to his assistance in auctioning the *Cerebus/Spirit* story from *Cerebus Jam* that Sunday.

★★★★★★★★★★

Alan Moore, who as everyone now knows is a regular reader of *Taboo*, is a brilliant artist in his own right and has agreed to do a *Cerebus / From Hell* jam piece featuring Cerebus and William Gull at some point in the next few months.

★★★★★★★★★★

Trina Robbins did a jam piece for San Francisco which went for $110. After a long day of doing radio interviews, it was a very pleasant diversion to attend the party celebrating the opening of the *Cartoon Art Museum's* "Women in Comics" exhibit, with many many wonderful pieces from Trina's extensive collection (I didn't know M.K. Brown was a woman!). The only one missing was Colleen Doran. Should've been at least two pages from her first *Sandman* story. Oh, well, maybe next time.

★★★★★★★★★★

Martin Wagner's benefit piece for the Reed Waller Crisis Fund is available from Double Diamond Press, 9300 Northgate Blvd. #16, Austin, TX 78758–6105. Telephone credit card orders can be made to (512) 837-5545. Cost is $60 for the silk-screened *Hepcats/Omaha* piece. Gerhard and I will be doing the front cover for the second benefit book.

★★★★★★★★★★

My old pal Kevin Eastman has come through with a benefit piece featuring *Cerebus* and those lovable reptiles *The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Haven't decided which stop we'll be auctioning that one at. Pittsburgh, maybe?

★★★★★★★★★★

Rick Veitch of King Hell contributes a *Bratpack/Cerebus* jam piece featuring Doctor Blasphemy and Cerebus. I think we'll save that one for Albany.

★★★★★★★★★★

Richard Corben, a legend in comics and self-publishing, has confirmed his appearance at the May 31 stop in Kansas City. This is turning into a year-long Christmas for me.

★★★★★★★★★★

Later.

PRINTED IN CANADA

CEREBUS

NO. 155 FEBRUARY 1992

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

LINDA BERZINS
Typesetting

MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS
a novel

•

BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 151 to Cerebus 162)
Flight

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 163 to Cerebus 174)

•

BOOK THREE
(Cerebus 175 to Cerebus 188)

•

BOOK FOUR
(Cerebus 189 to Cerebus 200)

CEREBUS IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY AARDVARK-VANAHEIM INC. P.O. BOX 1674 STN. C, KITCHENER, ONTARIO, CANADA N2G 4R4

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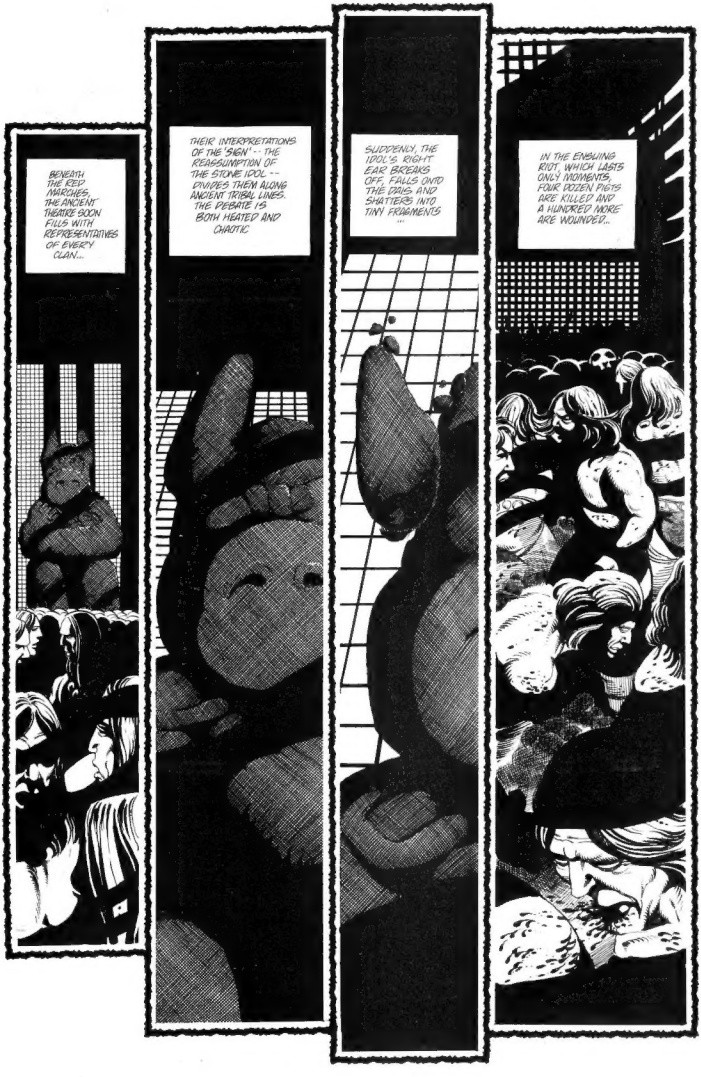
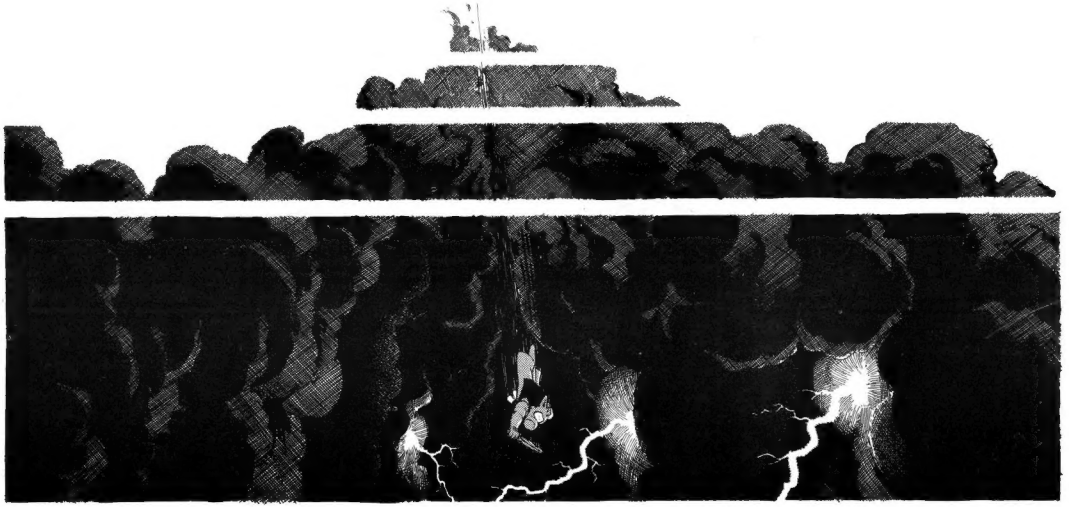
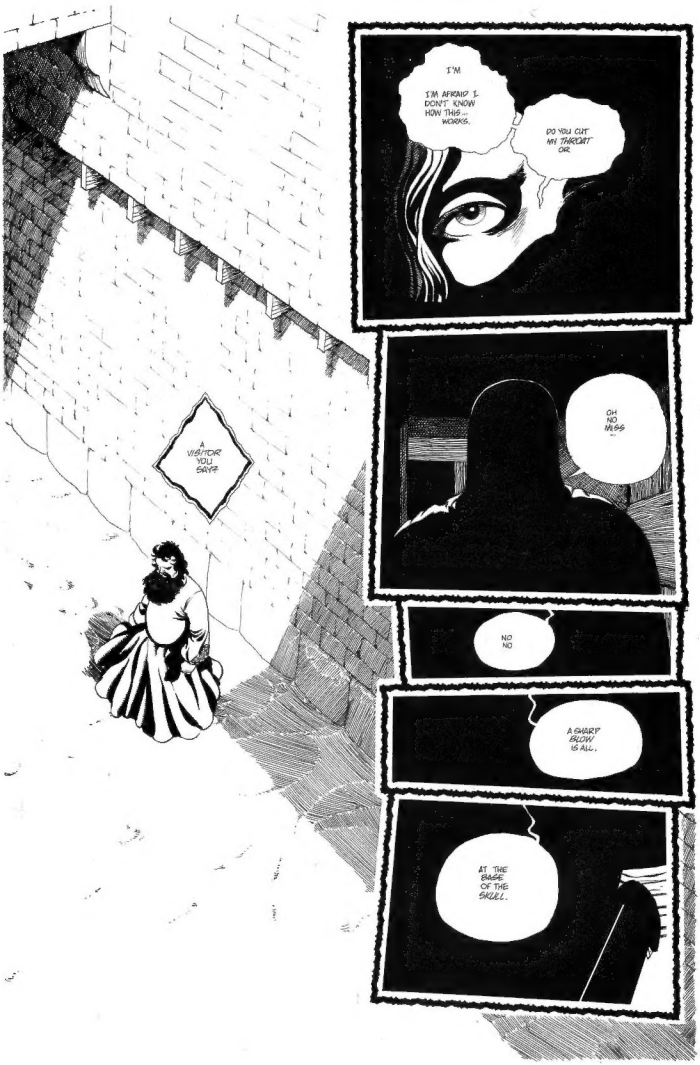

BENEATH THE RED MARCHES, THE ANCIENT THEATRE SOON FILLS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF EVERY CLAN...
THEIR INTERPRETATIONS OF THE 'SIGN' -- THE REASSUMPTION OF THE STONE IDOL -- DIVIDES THEM ALONG ANCIENT TRIBAL LINES. THE DEBATE IS BOTH HEATED AND CHAOTIC
SUDDENLY, THE IDOL'S RIGHT EAR BREAKS OFF, FALLS ONTO THE DAIS, AND SHATTERS INTO TINY FRAGMENTS ...
IN THE ENSUING RIOT, WHICH LASTS ONLY MOMENTS, FOUR DOZEN PRIESTS ARE KILLED AND A HUNDRED MORE ARE WOUNDED...

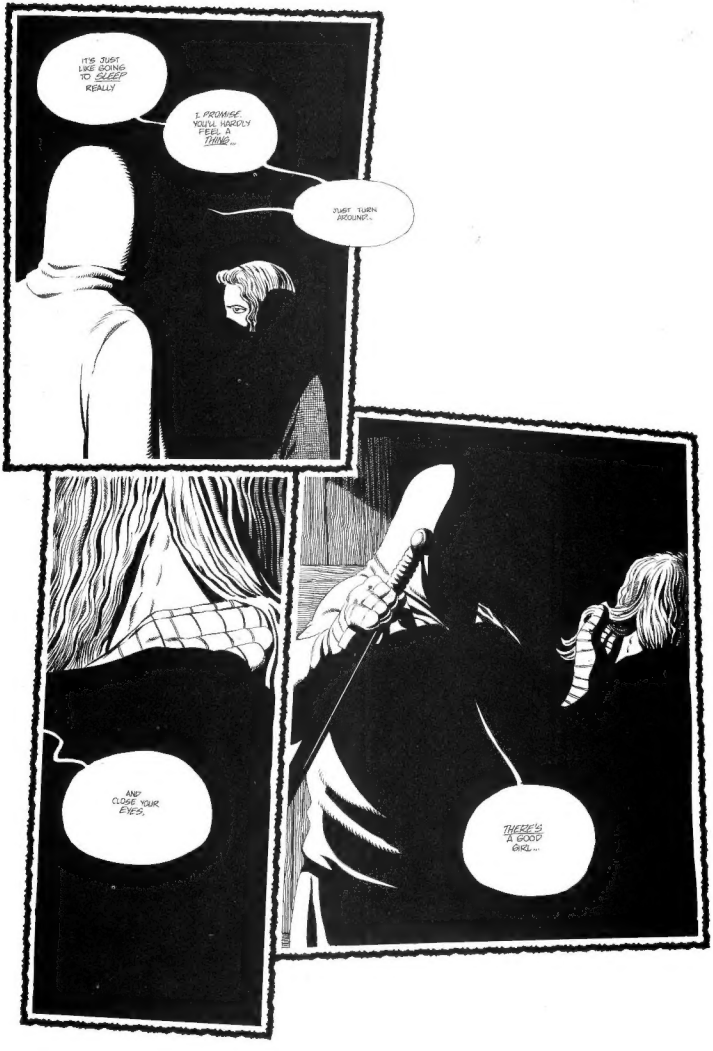


SOMETHING HAS GONE TERRIBLY WRONG-- THE SECOND COUSIN OF ALL BATTLES HAS ALREADY TAKEN PLACE AND IT APPEARS THE MEN HAVE COME IN A DISTANT RUNNER-UP--THERE IS NO SIGN OF THE ONE TRUE JUDGE AND JUDGING BY THE LOOKS ON THEIR HOODS, THE OCCUPYING FORCE OF CYCLOPISTS IS NOT ALTOGETHER LIKELY TO ACCEPT THAT MY REFERENCE TO "STINKING LEZBOSY WAS A WHIMSICAL AND LIGHTHEARTED MALAPROPISM!! NOTHING TO DO NOW BUT...
WHO?
YES
ALL MOTHERS AND CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE...
THERE'S BEEN AN OUTBREAK OF THE PLAGUE AND WE'RE NOT TAKING...
ANY CHANCES

THERE IS NO PLAGUE
HUSH, ALEXANDRA
WHERE WILL YOU TAKE US?
TO HEALTH CENTERS NEARBY...
JUST A PRECAUTION, REALLY...
YOU'LL BE RETURNED HERE AFTER YOU AND YOUR BABY HAVE BEEN TESTED
IT'S BECAUSE WE SAW THE POPE ISN'T IT?
ALEXANDRA! HUSH I SAID
WE MUST THINK OF THE BABY'S NEEDS FIRST
ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
YES MA'AM

MOTHER..
YES, ALEXANDER.
WHEN HE'S GROWN UP
YOU'LL TELL HIM HE HAD AN OLDER SISTER
... WON'T YOU?


I'M
I'M AFRAID I DON'T KNOW HOW THIS... WORKS.
DO YOU CUT MY THROAT OR
A VISITOR YOU SAY?
OH NO NOSS
NO NO
A SHARP BLOW IS ALL,
AT THE BASE OF THE SKULL.

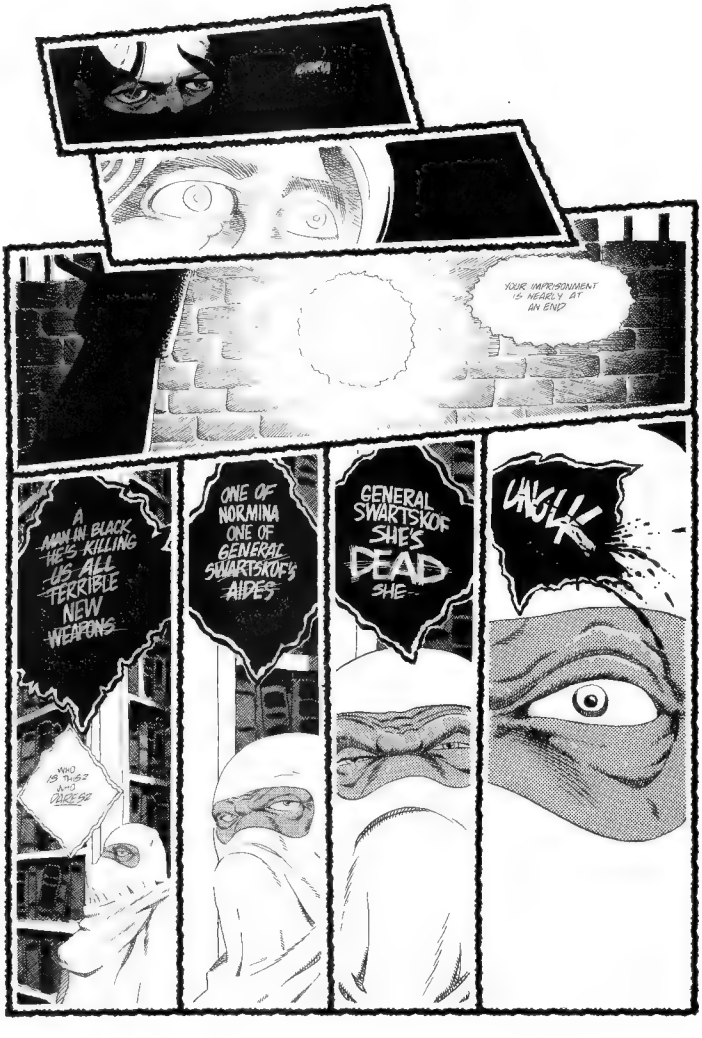

IT'S JUST LIKE GOING TO SLEEP REALLY
I PROMISE YOU'LL HARDLY FEEL A THING...
JUST TURN AROUND...
AND CLOSE YOUR EYES.
THERE'S A GOOD GIRL...

SCREECH
I AM BROUGHT UP SHORT BY THE TINGLING OF MY ROACH SENSE AND A MENTAL TAP ON THE SHOULDER. FROM MY NEWLY-REINTEGRATED PERSONALITIES REMINDING ME THAT I'M FUCKING TWIN PEARL-HANDED SEMI-AUTOMATIC CROSSBOWS CAPABLE OF DISCHARGING A DOZEN EXPLODING TIP CROSSBOW BOLTS EVERY ONE AND ONE HALF SECONDS WITH PINPOINT ACCURACY. THE SUDDEN AWARENESS GIVES BIRTH TO THE NEWEST AND MOST SELF-AWARE OF MY PERSONALITIES. WHATADAYTIM ROACH!!
EAT TASTY SEMI-AUTOMATIC DEATH YOU DILDO JOCKIES
TUNG
TUNG
TUNG
TUNG
TUNG
TUNG

TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG
TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG
TUNG
SPLAT
TUNG TUNG TUN
TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG TUNG

"PLAGUE?
AH SAY..
PLAGUE!?
HEH HEH HEH
DONT YOU ALL GO WORRYIN YO PRETTY NOGGED HAIR ABOUT LIL OLD ME-
IN CASE YOU ALL HAVENT NOTICED AHM THE NEWEST CARD CARRYIN' DUES PAYIN' MEMBER OF THE L.O.S. HYPHEN F HYPHEN T HYPHEN C
THE LEGION O'SIX-FOOT TELEPATHIC-COCKROACHES...
US SIX-FOOT TELEPATHIC COCKROACHES ARE AS IMPERVIOUS TO HARM AS AN ORANGE PEEL IN A NAIL BITER'S CONVENTION

SO F YOU ALL JUST STEP BACK AWAY A STEP OVER THIS HERE IMPROVISED BARRICADE.
ON THE OTHER HAND YOU CAN NEVAH BE TOO CAREFUL ABOUT AN OUTBREAK OF THE PLAGUE.
" OR EATING BLUE FRUIT"
AS MY DADDY USED TO SAY
SQUEEE


YOUR IMPRISONMENT IS NEARLY AT AN END
A MAN IN BLACK HE'S KILLING US ALL TERRIBLE NEW WEAPONS
WHO IS THIS MAN DARKESS
ONE OF NORMINA ONE OF GENERAL SWARTSKOF'S AIDES
GENERAL SWARTSKOF SHE'S DEAD SHE
LAUGH

WHAT IN HELL IS GOING ON DOWN THERE!?
YOU ARE UNDOUBTEDLY A MANIFESTATION OF MY DEEPEST INNER FEAR THAT I AM NOT AN AGENT OF THE WILL OF THE LIVING TARIM BUT THAT I AM, IN FACT THE LIVING TARIM HIMSELF AND I HAVE CONDEMNED MYSELF TO OBSERVATION WITHOUT PARTICIPATION IN HUMAN AFFAIRS FOR ALL TIME AS A WAY OF APOLOGIZING FOR HAVING CREATED DEATH
ALSO (UNDOUBTEDLY) I HAVE CREATED YOU AS A KIND OF "EVIL TWIN" WHO IS ABLE TO ACT OUT DEEP-ROOTED URGES SUCH AS TELLING DEATH HE DOESN'T EXIST
THEREBY CAUSING HIM TO CEASE TO EXIST
PERMITTING ME, THEREFORE TO ELIMINATE DEATH WITHOUT HAVING TO ACCEPT THE BLAME FOR HAVING DONE SO.

DEATH ..IS A FACT OF EXISTENCE HAVING NEITHER PHYSICAL NOR SPIRITUAL FORM. YOU ARE (OBVIOUSLY) A METAPHYSICAL INCARNATION OF SOME SELF-DEFEATING ENTITY OF ILL-DEFINED PARAMETERS AND MOTIVATION SEEKING TO ESCAPE OR JUSTIFY YOUR OWN SELF-DESTRUCTIVE NATURE BY TAKING THE FORM OF AN IMPARTIAL AND OMNISCIENT UNIVERSAL ARCHETYPE AS A MEANS OF EVADING YOUR OWN ACTIONS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES
ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE CIRCUITOUS REASONING BY WHICH YOU, MY EVIL TWIN, PERMIT YOURSELF TO ENCOMPASS ALL THE TRAITS AND QUALITIES OF THE LIVING TAROT -- TO WIT: 'AN IMPARTIAL AND OMNISCIENT UNIVERSAL ARCHETYPE' - WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY AVOIDING THE CONCLUSION TO WHICH SUCH A DEFINITION MUST LEAD BY ITS VERY NATURE...
LET'S GO THROUGH THAT AGAIN - SLOWLY!
OF COURSE
I HAVE NOTHING BUT TIME.
WHO ARE YOU?

WHO ARE YOU?
QUIET IN THE CELLS!
IF YOU'RE THE REAL REGENCY ELF...
THEN WHO STAYED IN THE AMBASSADOR SUITE RIGHT BEFORE CEREBUS MOVED IN...
COUNTESS ELAINE SHELLY ...
AND WHAT DID SHE DO EVERY MORNING WHEN SHE GOT OUT OF THE ...
SHE PICKED THE DEAD SKIN OFF OF HER BIG TOE AND SHE ATE IT

BLECH!
OKAY, NOW I GET TO ASK YOU ONE ...
CEREBUS?
WELCOME BACK TO THE SEVENTH SPHERE!
SWENTELUS VO...
AT YOUR SERVICE
NEXT: MIND GAME V:

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dear Dave,

I don't like to generalize, so I'm not going to say "America sucks", or even "American undergraduate education sucks", though god knows it's tempting. What I will say is that standards at this one institution where I've landed myself for the next several years are *fucking appalling* and the attitude of some (not all) of the "teaching" staff towards their classes is criminal.

Background: I'm a grad student from New Zealand, I'm broke, I'm marking first year exams to pay for Christmas. I heard before I came here that American students at grad level were generally more articulate than NZ ones, but not as good at written work. And now that I've seen the general level of the first year's here I begin to understand why. *Does no one ever teach these kids to write?* I mean it's not just that they can't spell, they are totally clueless about grammar, and don't know what a large minority of the words they use actually mean. Even when you work out what they're trying to say, the painful fact is that half the time it makes no sense.

I've marked exams at home. You learn pretty quickly not to expect too much from first year's. What I'm saying is, I was *not* going in with unrealistic expectations. Three paragraph introductions to hide the fact that the poor little examinee hasn't read the book? Fictitious versions of such-and-such an authority's views on the matter in hand desperately invented on the spot? Clumsy arguments, poor logic, total failure to answer the question? Been there, done that. But Americans — I wasn't going to generalize so okay, *these* Americans are doing work I'd expect from school certificate candidates. School certificate is the exam New Zealanders sit at fifteen. And don't get me wrong, the point isn't that New Zealanders are brilliant, it's that students here aren't being made to meet even weak standards.

When you see the sort of ground-level ignorance which passes for normal here — and "here" is supposedly one of the *good* universities — a lot of things about this country start to make sense. Ronald Reagan, for instance. David Duke.

I got rung up this morning by the guy who taught the course. This is why I'm writing this letter; the alternative was to find one of those nice available semi-automatic American guns and go pay the bastard a visit. He was angry to find I'd only awarded nine A's. I mean he was *angry*, he thought *I'd* done something wrong. And do you know why he was angry? Because if there are only nine A's, it makes his teaching look bad.

It. Makes. His. Teaching. Look. Bad.

Words fail me.

So here these poor kids are, with a professor whose main aim in life is to give high grades *whatever* they write for him. He gets large classes, the powers above jot down on their little jotters that here we have a popular teacher, well done lad, good to see an academic who can inspire our youth, his career moves up a gear and the students never get the correlation between *good work* and *good results* forced on their awareness. I mean, *shit*—

Hell with it, this isn't making me feel better. Maybe I should go with the semi-automatic.

See you in court, Dave.

Maui.

P.S. The list of tour stops on the back of 152 can't be all there's going to be. Where's the one for New York?

P.P.S. Hey Cam, who's editing *Salient* this year?

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave and Gerhard,

Well, it's been a little over six months since I began reading *Cerebus* and I felt it was time to write in. I also realize this may not be the most intellectual, thought provoking, or controversial letter you have received but then again I am not commenting on masturbation or the misplacement of my bong.

I still remember walking into the mall comic store (my first time in one) and asking about a Frank Miller *Batman* book that I had glanced at briefly while attending the University of Kansas. Since the book had crossed my mind every once in a while and I was finally working and earning a salary, I decided to purchase it and spend a little more time reading it. Once again, I was amazed at the graphic artwork and the mature tone of the story. It only made me want to read more. The following day I ventured back to the comic store and started wandering around aimlessly since I really had no idea what to look for. Eventually, I saw a header card in the back issue rack with *Cerebus* on it, and since my friends and I always joked about the guard dog from Hell, I decided to buy a back issue and show it to them. I chose issue No. 85 because the guy on the cover looked something like Mick Jagger and the little gray creature looked a lot like me after 6 drinks while reaching for another.

Needless to say, after reading it, I never showed it to them. If I had, they would have (1) asked me what I was doing in a comic book store in the first place because most of them are rather closed minded and (2) wondered why I continued to read it and buy back issues if I had laughed at it at first and thought it was stupid. After one issue I knew I would never think that and during the past few months I have been able to find all the original back issues back through No. 52.

While in school, I was a part-time disc jockey (2–6 AM shift) at the college radio station and would always play artists like Billy Bragg, Julian Cope, Tom Waits, The Pogues, and Richard Thompson. I hope it does not offend you when I compare you with them in terms of your humor, your literary consciousness, and the way you can twist a phrase (plus the *Cerebus* covers are a hell of a lot better than their album covers). Also, I am glad Cerebus drinks his ale

quite frequently because, hell, he has had a rather rough life and deserves to cop a buzz every now and then. And Dave, after reading back through those back issues, anyone who dares to believe the stories in or the quality of your publication has gone down is either jealous or impotent. The ideology in *Cerebus* is your vision and from what I have read during my short knowledge of *Cerebus* I hope (know) you won't change it. Anyway, any comic book that can still hold my attention while I am in bed with my girlfriend must have some depth to it.

Well, that is my tale. I have included some information on Kansas City for your upcoming tour and will send some more when I go back (I live in Ames, IA now but go back frequently). WAIT. I am writing this at work and my secretary has come in to speak with me and inform me of the latest office rumors. (PAUSE). Damn, now I know why I shouldn't date people at work. I also realize I talk too much when I get drunk. What a mess — I think I need a Black Label.

I'm in it for the next thirteen years (God, I'll be two years from 40!).

With a lust for vomit,

Kirk Fredrichs
518 S. 3rd St., Apt. #3
Ames, IA
USA 50010

P.S. If you include this in your letter column then I can truthfully say I had something I wrote at my job published.

P.P.S. I would also like to know how to tell the real *Cerebus* #1 from the counterfeit issue. Maybe you could print these characteristics in your Notes column.

★★★★★★★★★★

As an afterthought:

I came across Khem in a book, listed as an Egyptian God. From the listing, it seems that Khem is synonymous with Set. I don't have the material at hand now, but I believe Set is a snake god.

Here's something (found in a AD&D Book): "God of Evil & Night . . . Implacable enemy of Osiris & Horus (son of Osiris, "The Avenger") The Avenger? At the moment, that sounds like *Cerebus*.

Wait a minute! Wait one fucking minute!

'73 Britannica: On Set, Khem, or Setekh, "He was represented as a composite creature with a greyhound's body, long curved snout, etc."

Then: "Various animals have been suggested as the prototype (eg. dog, pig, . . . ANTEATER).

What the hell is going on? This seems to identify Cerebus or Cerebus' race with a God of Evil.

It goes on to say:

"In the late Pharaonic period, when the cult of Osiris gained great popularity, Setekh was execrated as his murderer; Horus, son of Osiris, fought with Setekh and avenged his father's death."

Dave, PLEASE tell me if I'm on the right trail!

Pig Dionysus
P.O. Box 58094
Louisville, KY
USA 40268-0094

P.S. I just bought 78–79 and noticed the Ankh in 78. How long have you been planning this parade of Egyptian Mythos, anyway? Since Khem's 1st appearance?

★★★★★★★★★★

Hi Dave and Gerhard!

Cerebus 152 has me almost frantic with anticipation of the rest of *mothers & daughters*. I can't think of a better Christmas present from you to your readers than this issue.

I'm sure that there are some readers who will look only at the action scenes and think that *mothers & daughters* is just a return to the early "Cerebus the Barbarian" days. While I'm fascinated by the sudden activity of Cerebus after a long period of inactivity, I'm much more intrigued by the new information on the world of the Cirinists.

The most fascinating scenes for me in this issue are the people believing that Cerebus has been resurrected to save them from the Cirinists, the uncertain connection between Cirin and Cerebus, the supernatural connections such as the Black Blossom Lotus and the gold coins, and, the most interesting of all to me, the probable repercussions of General Swartskof disobeying Cirin. I look forward to *Cerebus* 153 with more anticipation than any other book or comic in years.

I didn't get busy soon enough to order the signed, numbered edition of *Melmoth*, but I will be sending in a separate order today for the regular edition.

As my interest in *Cerebus* has increased exponentially in recent months, my interest in other comics has decreased to an all-time low. I have been reading and collecting comics for over 35 years, but I can't remember a time that I have followed fewer comics. Except for *Cerebus* and the Cerebus reprint, *The Spirit* is the only title I follow regularly. I also buy *Concrete* and *Xenozoic Tales*, but those titles come out infrequently. Even *The Spirit* has only a few issues to go, although I've heard rumors that a few months after the last issue, Denis Kitchen will start reprinting the earliest Spirit comic sections.

I wish you both the best of holidays and the new year.

Peace, Live Long and Prosper

Jerry Edwards
P.O. Box 1703
Vancouver, WA
USA 98668-1703

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

As I've been reading *Cerebus* lately I have been wondering why it is people write you the weirdest, most personal letters instead of offering you comment on this silly little comic that you happen to produce. I don't know if you'll find this interesting, but I thought I'd offer you my musings on this (why?). I think the reason for the bizarre letters you get is that because of *Cerebus* you have created for yourself the status of a cult leader. You know, one of those people that you're either into or not, and if you are into them you have to devote your entire life to that person, examples being Paul Westerberg, Andy Warhol, Timothy Leary. Plus there's the fact that since you publish all these types of letters means that you actually read these letters and the letter writer gets the feeling that you care about what he has to say. It's like if I wrote a letter to *Thor* telling Tom DeFalco that I feel like killing myself because 'muh gurl' left me, I'd never know what he thinks about that because *Thor* doesn't publish 'those' kinds of letters. So what I guess I'm trying to get around to is that even if we never say explicitly that we like *Cerebus*, telling you about ourselves means we love you Dave.

Well the reason why *I'm* writing this is that I've been godawful depressed since September and after reading this month's *Aardvark Comment* I thought I'd

give the letter writing thing a crack. I envy you Dave. I don't know if I should, but I do because as far as my life goes this creative artist lifestyle is the shits. Don't ever become a 22 year old film student. It sucks. Especially when your senior thesis film, the film that your entire educational career resides on, is going down the toilet. I won't go into particulars, but I've learned that I have to be more careful with the people I get involved with creatively. I'm trying to stage a comeback, but I can't shake this ambivalent feeling that I gots. Then I'm feeling equally ambivalent about my poetry. I don't know where to go with it. Well whatever. I know, I know. I just have to keep myself at it. Whatever.

Actually, I feel like I'm living in a vacuum. Every day I feel myself retreating more and more from reality. I keep remembering something you said (I think it was in *Comics Journal* regarding the Artist's Bill of Right), "I'm so esoteric in my thinking I can't even get along with other esoteric thinkers." It seems applicable to my life as well. I can't get along with 'normal' people and it's hard being friends with others who are as anti-social as I am. Creatively, I do live in a vacuum. Most of my friends have the same tastes I do, but I can't ever seem to relate. I wonder why anybody ever bothers being nice to me. All I'm trying to say I guess is that being an artist is nice and all, but usually it sucks.

Oh, hey! I do have something relevant to say about *Cerebus*. I wasn't much impressed by *Melmoth* as I was buying the individual issues. I couldn't keep track of the story month to month (I kept getting Robbie and Reggie mixed up). But when I read the whole story in one setting after it was all done I was practically in tears the whole way through. Great stuff.

Sincerely,

Michael Everleth
125D Perkins Rd.
Rochester, NY
USA 14623

★★★★★★★★★★

Sir,

In the third decade of this century the renowned author and entomologist Vladimir Nabokov began writing novels in Russian under the pseudonym of "V. Sirin". Etymologically speaking, this is, of course, the origin of the word "Cirin" which is to be found in your curious *roman noir*. Is there a prize available for philological annotations of the above kind? If so, I would like a turnip, a cuspidor, a Shetland pony and a pound of lard to be delivered to my suite at the Algonquin immediately.

In relation to the preceding paragraph, it may amuse you to learn that "cuspidor" was the favourite word of another noted author, James Joyce, who was superstitious about the way silverware was to be placed on a table, and who suffered terribly with his eyes, apparently.

I could go on, regaling you with these little-known facts and literary scholia, but I'm afraid I'm rather busy at the moment, as I'm studying hard for my degree in gynaecology, and expect to receive some "hands-on" experience, as it were, within the next few days, and am quite understandably excited at the prospect.

Yours insincerely,

H. Motes
286 Holmbury House
Loughborough Park
London SW9 8NP
England

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

RE: "I have taken a course (The Forum) and realized that I have to get my life together, schoolwise. So I am. This is very good."

Reply to Don Hutton's letter, take one . . .

Thank you, Don, for pointing all of this stuff out to me. I appreciate it.

But dammit, get your facts straight first.

The Forum is similar to EST, yes, but YOU CAN GO TO THE BATHROOM IF YOU WANT. This is a major difference that I appreciated muchly. Also, you are not locked into a hotel hall nor are you deprived of food. Sleep, yes. I don't have a problem with you knocking EST or the Forum—if you don't like it or want to do it, fine—but you might want to update those dusty files from ten years ago first, because otherwise you might sound like some radical idiot who doesn't even bother to check his facts first before spouting out about something.

Just trying to be helpful . . .

But that's not my point.

My point is that my original letter basically dealt with the fact that I am a happy guy. I am happy because the events in my life are going well, not because of some mystical Forum course I've taken.

You may notice that I said that "*I* have taken a course" (double accent on the "I") because it HELPED ME. Period. I never said that it would help you, or harm you, or give you a screaming blue four-hour orgasm (hey! Good name for a band, that), or promised any other results—shit, I just said the damn Forum was useful as far as *I* was concerned. I mentioned it in parentheses because I thought people might be interested in what I did.

Also you may note that the ONLY thing I attributed to the Forum was the realization that I was fucking up my life with regards to school—which was absolutely true. I never claimed that any of my other happinesses were a result of the Forum, nor did I mean to.

I'll be honest—yeah, the Forum helped me. It gave me a lot of realizations about what I was doing with my life and I got my shit together because of it. But did I say that you should do it? No. It's not for everybody. And did I try to propagandize it, to say that hey, you can have a life as truly PRIMO as mine if you do this goddamn course?

No.

Never.

Not once.

Donny, babe, you missed my point. My point was that a lot of Dave's readers use this column as some sort of cryrag to complain about every little thing that's upsetting their miserable little lives, and that's kind of silly, isn't it? Did you think I was writing in about how happy I was to tell you how great the Forum was for me?

To summarize in case you missed it, Donny boy:

IT WAS A JOKE.

I WAS LAMPOONING THE FUTILITY OF SOME OF THESE LETTERS.

AND MY "CERTAIN SMUGNESS" WAS BECAUSE IT *IS* KINDA SILLY AND *I* DON'T DO IT.

Sorry you missed it, but I think it's time to talk about freedom here.

Two lines in my letter out of about thirty, and you're compelled to write over a hundred lines rebutting it and send me a half a

pound of xeroxed articles. If something as minor as that can set you off, if a small comment in favor of something can set your gears grinding that badly, then I think we really have to consider who's been brainwashed here.

I don't know what's happened to you in the past that makes you react to any mention of the Forum so violently, but it must have been something horrible because you sound more like propaganda than I ever did.

And I feel sorry for you, because my entire letter was devoted to telling you how truly wonderful my life was going, how I had finally found the relationship of my dreams (still going strong after a year, thanks), how I was writing my novel (finished and being looked over by a couple of agents), how I had finagled my way back into school by sheer talent alone (getting straight B's, thank you very much), and how I was generally happy, and what is your comment on all of these wonderful things?

"Mr. Steinmetz's letter in issue 151 was one of the most heart rending that I have read in a long time."

Dude, I don't know why you feel compelled to tromp on people's happiness like this, but I suspect you're not much fun at parties either.

I'm not saying this because I've taken the Forum and I feel you're not "enlightened"; I'm saying this because it's pretty obvious you can't accept someone's happiness if they didn't achieve that happiness in a manner that's acceptable to you. Maybe I am brainwashed, but if I'm happy being brainwashed, who cares? And why should you if I'm not trying to force my way of life on you? Hell, It's hard enough for anyone to be happy without kibitizing over HOW they got to be happy.

I'm sorry if you want to rip that happiness away from a lot of people who may have gotten it through methods that YOU consider "brainwashing" (or "looks a little *like* brainwashing"), because that indicates a kind of megalomanical sickness that indicates that everyone MUST be "rational" and MUST think like you do, happy or not.

Are you any better than your enemies?

Readers, decide.

I've always stood for freedom, both before and after the Forum. I don't want to run your life; I have my hands full trying to handle mine. If writing in and complaining to Dave makes you happy, do it. If speaking out against the Forum makes you happy, do it. Or if doing the Forum makes you happy, then fine, do it, but I'm not a mouthpiece for the fucking thing. It made me happy. It was worth my money. Maybe it's worth yours, but who knows? My point is that this is really a bastard of a goddamn world, and happiness is rare enough that you should grab it whenever and however you can as long as you don't hurt anyone.

But dammit, don't try to tromp on my happiness or I'll mow you down, cocksucker.

Love,

William Thomas Steinmetz
67 Clinton Avenue
Norwalk, CT
USA 06854

P.S. Despite my evident lack of agreement with Mr. Hutton, he's right on one thing. You should check up on those people who're trying to sell you a new way of living. You should especially check people's motives to see if they're trying to defend you against a potentially harmful way of life or sell you one of their own. Astute readers may notice I didn't put any addresses in MY letter.

P.P.S. Werner Erhard was (and is) a bastard. So was Martin Luther King, Jr. So was Socrates. Does that mean they didn't have valid points too?

P.P.P.S. Copies of my articles (which are much better written than this, by the way) can be had simply by writing me. What a deal, what a deal.

P.P.P.P.S. Anybody notice that this letter column has less and less to do with Cerebus and more with its readers? It's a clever plot. Dave's going to get us hooked on the adventures of M'Oak and K-Man and the like, and then he's going to spin off Aardvark Comment into a separate comic and make us cough up an additional $2.25 a month. Yes, Dave's a genius in more ways than one.

P.P.P.P.P.S. People have talked about all the different sorts of music you can listen to while reading Cerebus, but if you want to try cramming two complex works of genius into your brain at the same time, listen to Frank Zappa and read Cerebus at the same time. Maybe I can't promise you a four-hour screaming blue orgasm by taking the Forum, but Sim and Zappa . . . ah, they'll do it every time.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

An ice storm knocked out our power about 4:30 this morning. Nothing much to do but start a fire and huddle under blankets to stay warm. Once the sun came up we all got out our favorite books to read. Cheryl had her Sherlock Holmes, Sean had a *Where's Waldo* book, and Paul selected a stack of *Inside Sports* to read. I decided this would be a perfect opportunity to read *Cerebus* from start to finish—the first 150 issues. No phones, no TV, no work . . . just *Cerebus.*

Dave I just got to tell you, it's still a good read. I noticed things that I had never noticed before. I saw pieces of the puzzle come together that I never had seen before. The evolution of the roach alone would make this a worthwhile buy, but Cerebus himself is what makes this comic worth reading even when he is hardly in the story. Each month I enjoy picking up *Cerebus* just to see what's going on. No preconceptions, just looking to see what the crazy bastard is up to this time. Keep up the good work and thanks for putting out the large volumes for those of us who got here late.

Dave Banks
15224 Sharp Street
Omaha, NE
USA 68137

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Merry Christmas!

I'm a certified math geek, and most people think that math humor is either nonexistent, a required precursor to ostracism, or comparable to licking a dust-bunny. In hopes of dissuading such conceptions (or possibly confirming them) I present to you a list of

Popular Proof Techniques

Proof by example:
The author gives only the case n=2 and suggests that it contains most of the ideas of the general proof.

Proof by intimidation:
'Trivial.'

Proof by peer-pressure:
'All mathematicians *I* know believe this proposition.'

Proof by vigorous handwaving:
Works well in classroom or seminar setting.

Proof by cumbersome notation:
Make sure each variable has at least four subscripts: $\gamma_{x,y,z,b}$.

Proof by exhaustion:
An issue or two of a journal devoted to your proof is useful.

Proof by omission:
'The reader may easily supply the details.'

'The other 253 cases are analogous.'

'. . .'

Proof by funding:
How could three different government agencies be wrong?

Proof by eminent authority:
"I saw Karp in the elevator and he said it was probably NP-complete.'

Proof by personal communication:
'Eight-dimensional colored-cycle stripping is NP-complete [Karp, personal communication]'

Proof by reference to inaccessible literature:
The author cites a simple corollary of a theorem to be found in a privately circulated memoir of the Slovenian Philological Society, 1883.'

Proof by egotism:
'The details of the proof are mundane and left for lesser mathematicians.'

Proof by conspiracy:
A handful of authors all write their own papers, each citing the others for the proof of the theorem.

Proof by importance:
A large body of useful consequences all follow from the proposition in question.

Proof by funny picture:
A more convincing form of proof by example. Combines well with proof by omission.

Proof by forward reference:
The proof is cited in a forthcoming paper by the author, which is often not as forthcoming as the first.

Proof by probability:
'We shall show that the probability of the theorem *not* being true is exceedingly low.'

Proof by cosmology:
The negation of the proposition is unimaginable or meaningless. Popular for proofs of the existence of God.

Proof by metaproof:
'A method is given to construct the desired proof. The correctness of the method is proved by any of these techniques . . .'

Proof by vehement assertion:
It is useful to have some kind of authority relation to the audience.

Proof by appeal to intuition:
Cloud-shaped drawings frequently help here.

Ah yes. The pursuit of humor knows no bounds, does it? In any case, enjoy yourself. Stay cool. Don't drool.

Thomas
"spare me the revolution" Hull
201–E Gravelly Hill Road
Wakefield, RI
USA 02879

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Mr. Dave & Gerhard:

This letter is in response to K-Man's letter in issue 152. I want to say it took alot of guts to say what he did. I really want to congratulate him on how he handled the situation. I really think you did the right thing. After reading your letter I was moved. You see, I'm a first year university student and the same thing happened to me. I'm only going out with this girl and I know it's not the same as marriage, but we've grown a long and trusting relationship and I truly love her. This was all put to test when I went to university. There was another girl and we did the flirting thing but the only difference between me and you is I went through the door and found out what she had to offer. My girlfriend still doesn't know but I feel I'll have to tell her in time. One night on my own I was thinking of what I did and felt like a piece of shit because first of all she would never cheat on me and second she believes in and trusts me alot. I've vowed never to cheat on her again K-Man, I know you're going to think about her for the rest of your life and what could of happened but I went through it and think you did the right thing. I also admire your self control and strength. If you ever need to talk drop a line in Aardvark Comment (but where else).

Gerhard don't ever leave.

Dave don't ever change.

X-Man
Someplace
Somewhere

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I'm sorry that sixteen-year-old "Rob" (in *Cerebus* #152) feels alienated from his gay father. If his father has indeed "molested" underage friends of Rob's, as the young man's letter asserts, then Pop has probably broken a law. Laws against child abuse, regrettably, are broken every day, by both heterosexuals and homosexuals. Statistics show that straight fathers who abuse their daughters are by far the more common offenders. Few people would argue that children of either sex should go unprotected from adults who try to take advantage of them.

But however pained Rob may be by his father's inappropriate behavior, he has no business slandering an entire class of people. Homosexuality does not "lead to child molestation" anymore than the heterosexuality of a Richard Speck "leads to" mass murder. Antisocial pathologies can crop up among members of any group.

Hatred and ignorance of other people because they are in some way different *does*, however, lead to horrible crimes. It's easy to point to Nazis who killed Jews (and homosexuals and other disliked minorities) decades ago; but let's look closer to home. Last year a gay man in my neighborhood was slashed and bashed to death with a knife, pipe wrench and hammer by three youths — one the son of a policeman — who thought it would be fun to kill a queer. It could have been me who died. This kind of crap goes on all the time, which is why accusations based on stereotypes such as those in Rob's letter frighten me. I know all too well that among your readers are some who will actually believe — because bigoted ideas are *always* easy to believe — that Rob knows something about *all* gay people simply because he feels wounded by the individual who happens to be his father.

I hope Rob recovers from his illness, and I hope your other readers will be on guard against it.

Sincerely,

Howard Cruse
New York City, NY
USA

★★★★★★★★★★

On the next four pages is a collage of bits and pieces from the first stop on the US Tour — San Francisco. Thanks to Brian, Rory, Annette, Dave Caldwell, Peter Grubbs and everyone else for making it such a rousing success.

Benefit piece in progress. *Groo the Wanderer* and *Cerebus* by Sergio Aragones, Dave Sim and Gerhard. The original will be auctioned at the Los Angeles stop.

Proceeds to benefit the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund.

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NEW YORK MEGA OR BUST!!
MARF
OH!
AWE
STRAIGHT AHEAD - YOU CANT MISS IT ...uh...
'DUDE'
KITCHENER 3km
THANKS FOR TURTLES #8 - DAVE - IT'LL ALWAYS BE MY FAVORITE!!!
EASTMAN & SIM

Benefit piece in progress. ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*** **and** ***Cerebus*** **by Kevin Eastman, Dave Sim and Gerhard. The original will be auctioned at the Pittsburgh stop.**

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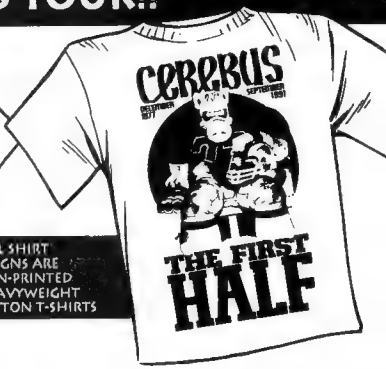

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transcript copy to Her Worship Cirin, Papal Library
transcript continues

Hammond:
don't know what you're asking. I was given specific instructions from Mrs. Thatcher that the gold sphere was to be exactly thirty-three meters across and that the . . .

Mrs. Copps:
I am well aware of the fact, Mr. Hammond, and as I am trying to explain to you, our blessed lady has had a vision that has told her that the dimensions of the gold sphere must now be forty-six meters across.

Hammond:
And I'm telling you that that isn't *possible. Look* down there. The forge is half-constructed . . . the mold has been . . .

Mrs. Copps:
Please don't raise your voice, Mr. Hammond, I can hear you perfectly well if you speak in a normal, civil tone.

Hammond:
What I'm saying is that the forge is half-constructed . . . the mold is already half-constructed . . . the dimensions for each are based on the thirty-three meter figure . . .

Mrs. Copps:
And that figure is wrong, Mr. Hammond. The correct figure is forty-six meters. You were instructed at the outset that there was every possibility that modifications might be necessary.

Hammond:
Modifications!! I agreed that if you needed modifications in the *plans*, that I could . . .

Mrs. Copps:
You're raising your voice again, Mr. Hammond. If you insist on shouting, we'll just have to postpone this little discussion until you are willing to discuss things in a calm and reasonable manner.

Hammond:
Yes. Yes. I'm sorry. If I may be permitted to finish my previous thought.

Mrs. Copps:
Certainly, Mr. Hammond. Your opinion in these matters is of the utmost importance. It is, after all, your field of expertise.

Hammond:
Yes. Yes it is. Thank you. You're very kind.

Mrs. Copps:
Much better, Mr. Hammond. Please go on.

Hammond:
Yes. What I'm attempting to point out is that the construction has been under way for several months now, beginning with the excavation for the furnace and proceeding through the construction of the forge, the ladle and the mold.

Mrs. Copps:
Your progress has been remarkable, Mr. Hammond. Our Lady has been very pleased.

Hammond:
Yes. Yes. Thank you. I've had to pioneer several different mathematical disciplines just to initiate the project. Several members of my staff who specialize in architecture, construction and metalurgy have found themselves in the same circumstance. Nothing of this scale has ever been attempted, every element has had to be developed independently . . .

Mrs. Copps:
The Goddess has informed your endeavours at every turn. Her divine inspiration fills each corner of your enterprise.

Hammond:
Yes. I . . . well, whatever. As you can see if you examine the site below us, you can see that each of the three elements, the forge, the ladle and the mold interconnect . . . it is critical that the interconnection be completely seamless if the sphere is to be pure; without blemish or flaw.

Mrs. Copps:
And it is seamless, bless Our Lady, Mr. Hammond. Now it just needs to be made a teensy-bit larger. Forty-six meters to be precise. Not thirty-three.

Hammond:
But it can't be done. It can't be made a centimeter bigger. It can't be made a millimeter bigger. The whole thing is . . .

Mrs. Copps:
Mr. Hammond, you're shouting again.

Hammond:
Yes. I'm sorry. I . . . if you want the sphere to be forty-six meters, then we'll just have to start again. From scratch. We'll have to tear everything out down to the excavation, enlarge the excavation itself . . .

Mrs. Copps:
Goodness, Mr. Hammond, do you really think you have time to do all that?

Hammond:
Time?

Mrs. Copps:
Well, yes. After all, you've promised that the sphere will be delivered by the end of next month. I wouldn't think you'd have time. I think Our Lady's suggestion that you modify what you have done already makes much more sense under the circumstances.

Hammond:
But if you want everything changed. I mean, I can't possibly guarantee a completion date if you . . . it just isn't possible.

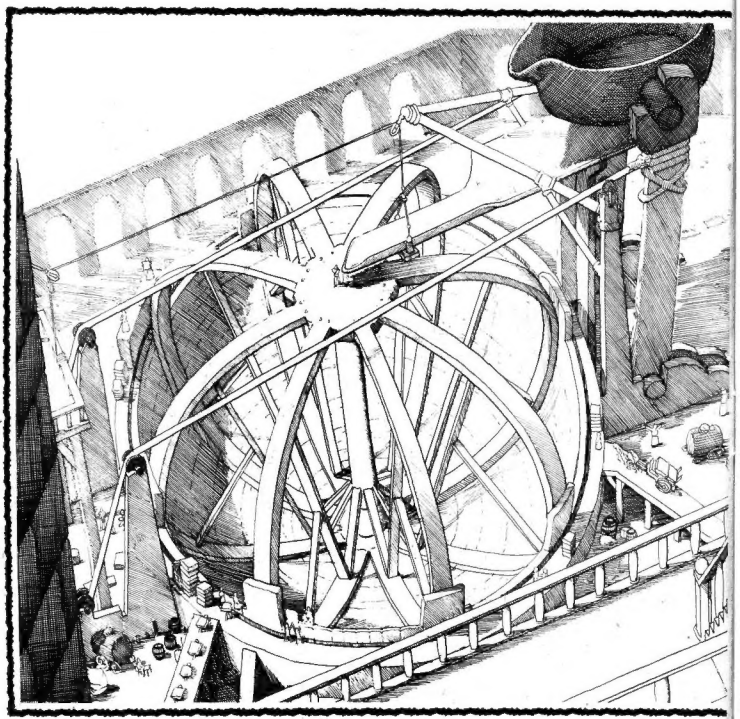
Mr. Copps:
Nonsense, Mr. Hammond. You've done splendidly. Now you just have to make a small change in the size. We wouldn't dream of asking you to undo all of your wonderful work. What a waste that would be, Mr. Hammond. Mm? What a dreadful, dreadful waste.

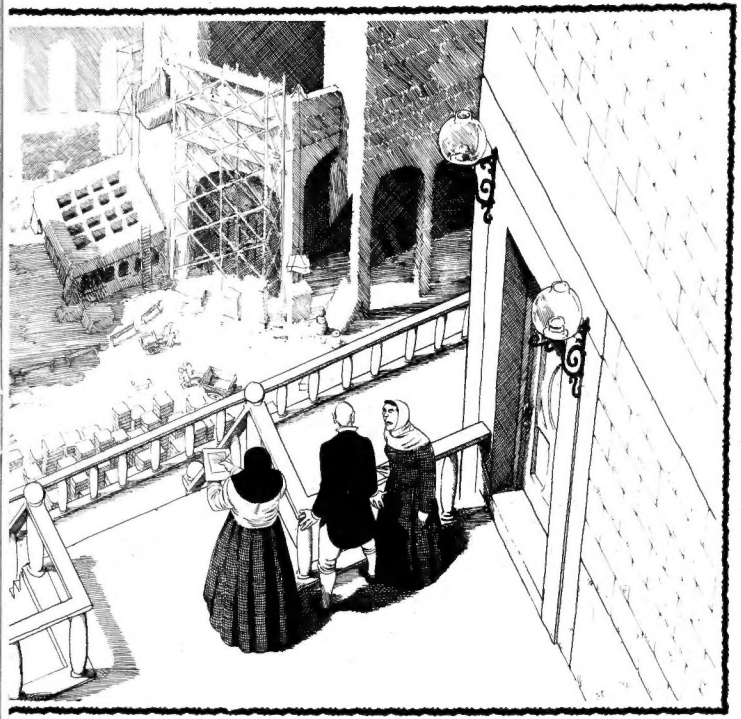
Hammond:
I. I'll see what I can . . . I'll talk to my staff . . .

Mrs. Copps:
That's the spirit, Mr. Hammond. We have the utmost confidence in you.

Hammond:
Thank you.

Mrs. Copps:
Now the second bit of business is your cost over-runs. We simply have to find a way to cut down on all the money you're spending on labour, materials and transportation costs. Goodness, just look at these figures for last month . . .





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WHEN WE ARRIVED THE PARTY WAS ALREADY PACKED. SIM-WHO'D BEEN HARD TO TALK TO AT THE CON-GABBED WITH MIKE AND ME AS IF WE WERE OLD FRIENDS..
...AND DAVID ZINGER HAS THESE HOOKERS WITH HIM, SEE? AND GINO SAYS TO ONE OF THEM...YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR
COOL... THAT'S GREAT...

SO!
SWEAR COMPLETE AND EVER-LASTING LOYALTY TO MY THUMB!
SO WHAT SHOULD YOUR FINGERS DO?
WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER - YOUR THUMB - IS UNTRUSTWORTHY, YOUR SUPPORTIVE FINGERS - EVERY PHONE CAN BE ACCOUNTED FOR BY THE LIFTING OF SPIES, THE FORMING OF UNIONS
WE HOLD THE FUTURES BETWEEN US...
IF HOWEVER, THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS BUREAUCRACY ARE NOT UNITED...
LIKE...

Art of the Aardvark

Dave Sim turns superhero car... nery into politi... ...er with a missio... ...satire with Cerebus, the...

BY IMRAN GHORI

When Dave Sim began *Cerebus* in 1977, many people in the comic book community didn't think it would last. After all, it was a black & white comic about a barbarian aardvark written, drawn and published by an unknown Canadian cartoonist in a market dominated by colorful superhero adventures.

Today, *Cerebus* is one of the most successful independent comic books published in North America, and Sim is one of the top cartoonists in the country. A projected 300-issue series, *Cerebus* is only halfway through its run.

The book chronicles the life of a surly aardvark who lives in a mythi- past reminiscent of Europe in Middle Ages. *Cerebus* is in ...of — what else — money, ...ooze and power.

...anted something funny," ...erview last week. ...Cerebus, ...he

there were so ma... proaches to hum... wanted to take ... what was going ... what made yo... Visually, Sim... ings after pop... Barry Winds... was drawn a... animated ch... image appe... detailed, ... flat, two-... top," Sim... That i... As Cere... substan... stories ... sword ... politi... In ... bega... of a... self... co... to... r...

...ith the character' ...e number of issu... ...with, Sim began ...ries as lengthier ...

...e first graphic no... ...ety, a 25-issue s... ...ected in one vo... ...'ebus' political ... ...dvark runs for ... ...nister of ... Socie... ...K at pe... ...nmer... ...ever v... ...vering ...

...n is h... novel ... whic... theme... ...ical dis... novel e... ...s and ...tions bet... ...n believes daughters, ... would be the ...tural division in ... matriarchal or feminist society.

Beyond that, Sim said, he has about two more novels before he wraps up with the 300th issue of *Cerebus* in March 2004.

...ER- ...on, ...ers." ...eries ...issue

PAGE

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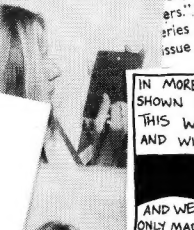

IN MORE WAYS THAN COULD BE SHOWN IN A SINGLE PAGE THIS WAS ONE OF THE BEST AND WILDEST PARTIES EVER.
AND WE ONLY MADE 15 INVITATIONS...

AND, CONSEQUENTLY IT'S STILL TALKED ABOUT TO THIS DAY...
REMEMBER THAT GUY WHO BARFED OFF THE BALCONY? OH MAN...
YEAH, WHO WAS THAT ASSHOLE ANYWAY?
DEREK McCULLOCH
ME
THE END

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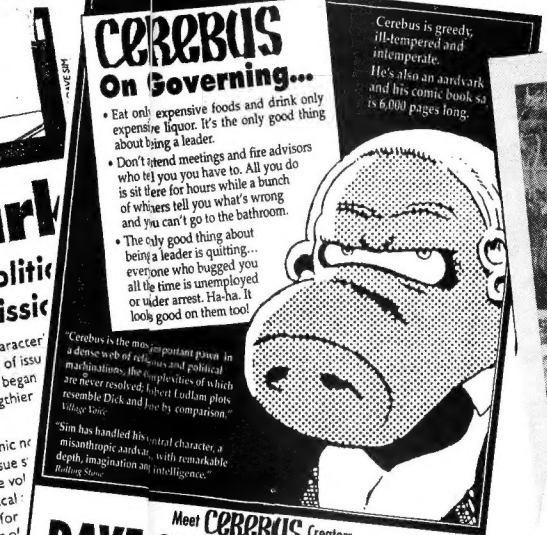
CEREBUS
On Governing...
• Eat only expensive foods and drink only expensive liquor. It's the only good thing about being a leader.
• Don't attend meetings and fire advisors who tell you you have to. All you do is sit there for hours while a bunch of whiners tell you what's wrong and you can't go to the bathroom.
• The only good thing about being a leader is quitting... everyone who bugged you all the time is unemployed or under arrest. Ha-ha. It looks good on them too!
Cerebus is greedy, ill-tempered and intemperate.
He's also an aardvark and his comic book sa... is 6,000 pages long.
"Cerebus is the most important pawn in a dense web of religious and political machinations, the complexities of which are never resolved; Robert Fudlam plots resemble Dick and June by comparison." Village Voice
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